

Delaware Public Health Officials Confirm First Flu Case of the 2019-2020 Season

DOVER – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing the state's first laboratory-confirmed case of influenza for the 2019-2020 flu season. The case, which also marks Delaware's first pediatric case of the season, involves an 8-year-old from New Castle County.

"The flu is here," said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "Now that we have lab-confirmation of our first case, we hope this further motivates individuals who have not yet gotten their annual flu shot to do so right away. Getting a flu shot is quick, easy, and not only protects you, but also those around you. Most of us frequently spend time around someone who is likely to have more severe consequences from influenza. If you don't want to do it for yourself, do it for your loved ones."

The flu vaccine is recommended for Delawareans 6 months of age and older. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection to develop in the body, it is important to get vaccinated as early as possible to give your body time to build immunity. Getting the flu vaccine now will also provide protection during the entire flu season. During the 2018-2019 flu season, Delaware recorded 6,387 laboratory-confirmed flu cases. More than 1,000 Delawareans were hospitalized due to the flu and 24 people died from flu complications.

Governor John Carney rolled up his sleeve and received his flu shot during Tuesday's Drive-Thru Flu Clinic, held by DPH on the main campus of the DelDOT Administrative Building in Dover. He asked Delawareans to get their flu vaccines early, preferably by the end of October, to protect against influenza

and its complications.



“Getting an annual flu vaccine is the best thing you can do to keep from getting and spreading the flu, and from missing work, school, and important family events,” said Governor Carney. “This is something you can do to protect your own health as well as the health of your grandparents, your children, co-workers or friends.”

Lieutenant Governor Bethany Hall-Long also drove through in her vehicle to get her flu vaccine. She reminded everyone that getting the flu vaccine is important for people of all ages, and not just those in high-risk groups such as those who are older or with compromised immune systems. She said the vaccine is also the best way to prevent not only flu illness, but also serious flu complications that may lead to hospitalization or death.

“The flu is unpredictable,” said Lt. Governor Hall-Long. “That’s why it’s important to get vaccinated every year, since we never know what kind of flu season we will see. Remember that a flu vaccine cannot cause flu illness. Your arm may feel achy where the vaccine was given, but that usually only lasts one or two days and is far less painful than a bout with the flu.”

DPH nurses, joined by nurses from the Division’s partners at Bayhealth and the Delaware Medical Reserve Corps, administered free intramuscular flu vaccines to drivers, their passengers and even pedestrians age 9 years and older. By noon, 615 vaccinations had been administered during the drive-thru clinic. In addition, DPH administered 151 vaccinations during its walk-up flu clinic held at Porter State Service Center in Wilmington on Friday, Oct. 4, 2019. The clinics are DPH’s two primary public events. DPH will also offer various other flu clinics throughout the season. A schedule can be found at <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/fluclinics.html>. Flu vaccines are also offered through physician offices, many

pharmacies and some grocery stores. To locate where flu vaccines near you are being offered, Google “CDC flu finder” and enter a ZIP code.

The flu is easy to transmit and you can get it even from seemingly healthy, but unvaccinated, children and adults. Children, older adults, and those who have chronic underlying medical conditions are most at-risk for complications from the flu and are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated now.

In addition to getting an annual flu shot, Delawareans can prevent the spread of the flu and other respiratory illness with good hygiene: Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and dispose of tissues immediately. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your inner elbow. Droplets from a sneeze can travel up to six feet. Also avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Keep your distance from people who are coughing or sneezing.

Flu symptoms come on suddenly, and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches and body aches, chills and fatigue. Some people get complications including pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus and ear infections. Those sick with the flu should stay home from work, school and other gatherings and not return until they have been free of fever – with a temperature of less than 100 degrees F (37.8 degrees C), without the use of fever-reducing medications – for at least 24 hours.

People with flu symptoms should avoid close contact with well people in the household and stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water and other clear liquids. Over-the-counter medicines can provide symptom relief, but if you suspect you have influenza, call your doctor as they may decide to provide antiviral medications to help hasten recovery and prevent serious complications. This is particularly important for those who feel very sick, are pregnant or have chronic medical

conditions.

For more information about the flu and where to get vaccinated, visit flu.delaware.gov or call 1-800-282-8672.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.